

(Cm)
Roxbury, Dec. 19, 1874. 132

Dear friend May:

With me the voyage of life is so far consummated that I am able to exclaim, "Land O!" and safely to prognosticate that, ere long, I shall have the privilege of landing on other shores, forming new associations, enjoying better privileges, discharging other duties, and in much better trim than when I started.

On Saturday last, 12th inst., I completed my seventieth year. Hence my latitude and longitude are easily computed. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." So runs the ancient record. But who would retrace his steps backward to pining infancy, if he could? But so it is not to be, and therefore what is divinely ordered must be for the best. True, we cannot now see "through what new scenes and changes we must pass" in the future life; but why, on the part of any rational being, should there be any dread or distrust in regard to such a translation? For if the present life is so attractive, it necessarily follows, in accordance with the law of progress, that the life to come must be increasingly advantageous and desirable. The change is a purely natural event, provided for all, and from it no deeper moral lesson is to be drawn than from the falling of autumnal leaves. Wherever we may be in the universe, and whatever may be our condition, Divine Love will be as solicitous for our welfare and happiness as now. Therefore all flesh may join with the Psalmist in saying, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever."

For myself, as in the past, so

"Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,

And love sincere the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful death the gate of life."

In taking a retrospective view of the past, I clearly see that
"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we may."

It amazes me to contemplate through what vicissitudes I have passed, to what seemingly fortuitous and trifling incidents I have owed the direction of my mind in the broad field of suffering humanity, the uses to which I have been especially put in the sacred cause of universal freedom, the intensity and duration of the conflict (now gloriously triumphant) over spiritual wickedness in high places and the powers of darkness combined; and for deliverances wrought, for mercies vouchsafed, for inward strength imparted, for sustaining faith at all times enjoyed, I am overwhelmed by a sense of what I owe to the Author of my being — "Him first, him last, him midst, and without end."

Well, as age is commonly reckoned, I am now in the category of "old men"; yet, in spirit I perceive no marked difference between seventy and forty.

Physically, indeed, I am crippled in the matter of locomotion, though as strongly as ever in favor of immediate and unconditional emancipation; but, aside from this drawback, I am in fair health, and feel no pressure of time. Nevertheless, in the presence of eleven grand-children it is useless to cherish any illusions on this subject! Welcome, then, old age! — even

“Though each must mourn, in life's advance,
Dear hopes, dear friends, untimely killed;
Must grieve for many a forfeit chance
And longing passion unfulfilled.

Amen! — whatever fate be sent,

Pray God the heart may kindly glow,
Although the head with cares be bent,
And whitened with the winter snow.”

Among my “crowning mercies” have been and still are the happiest family relations. Until she was stricken down and rendered helpless by paralysis in 1863, my dear wife was most efficient and indefatigable in regard to all household matters, cheerfully taking upon herself whatever additional burdens were imposed by the requirements of anti-Slavery hospitality, (our home having been, in this respect, a semi-hotel for more than a quarter of a century, and never a second girl to give her any assistance, though greatly needed, but beyond our means,) carefully looking after daily expenditures with marked economy and excellent judgment, and exerting herself to the utmost to relieve me of all domestic anxiety and care, so that I might have an unbroken consecration of my time and labors in the cause of the millions of bondmen groaning for deliverance. I now look back with equal wonder and

gratitude at what she performed, and the cheerfulness with which she met every emergency, however wearisome to the body or annoying to the spirit. No pledged vows were ever more sacredly fulfilled than hers have been, in all that pertains to wifehood and motherhood - to pure affection and unchanging love. And never, in the darkest hours of the anti-slavery struggle, did she utter any misgivings, or counsel a more expedient course of action. For eleven years she has borne her paralytic affliction with perfect resignation, never a murmur having escaped her lips, though without hope or chance of deliverance till what is mortal puts on immortality. Have I not cause to love and cherish her?

Blessed, too, are we in our children, who are all that we could desire in filial affection, in unity of spirit, and in pure and exemplary lives.

Next to Heaven's enfolding love, how deep is my indebtedness to those kind friends and approving co-laborers, whose generous "Testimonial" enables me to spend the evening of my days surrounded with the comforts of life! Especially, as you know, my dear friend, do I owe its consummation to your warm and steadfast friendship, accompanied by efforts as indefatigable as they were successful, and therefore making my obligations to you such as cannot be expressed in words. But far beyond the pecuniary value of the "Testimonial" was the spirit that prompted it on your part, and on that of the contributors thereto.

You are several years my junior. May you be preserved to a ripe old age! God bless you!

Your grateful friend,

Rev. Samuel May - Leicester, Ms.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

My wife sends her affectionate regards, with mine, to you all as a household.

Mr May, writes on the envelope containing this, - A memorable letter, (to be preserved & used - when?)

* On his 70th birth-day.

* It afterwards was discovered that he was born in Dec. 1805 (not 1804) and so was 69, not 70, at time of writing this. It was an error of the Newburyport recording officer.

Dec. 19. 1874